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The Religious Question in Mexico

BY A MEXICAN CATHOLIC

I. C. ENRIQUEZ

CATHEDRAL PLAZA APARTMENTS

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THE RELIGIOUS QUESTION IN MEXICO

BY

I. C. ENRIQUEZ

So much has been written about the religious difficulties in Mexico, so many groundless accusations against the Constitutionalists have been made by the Catholic Clergy, that I, as a faithful Catholic and Mexican revolutionist, feel it necessary to answer the numerous charges which are being unjustly heaped upon us. It is a lamentable fact that everyone of our accusers, either wilfully or through sheer ignorance, is overlooking the most important laws of the Mexican Constitution. They seem utterly ignorant of the history and the conditions of the country, its people and its aims, about which they are writing. Every one of them is hiding behind the cloak of religious bigotry and in the name of Christianity and the Catholic religion tries to bring naught but sorrow to a people that is struggling for justice and independence.

It is a sad commentary upon the Knights of Columbus Organization when it permits its organ to be used by a man who is afraid to sign his name to any article or argument that he may wish to present to them. Who is this man who, for fear of divulging his name, signs himself "An American Citizen." Why does he fear to make his name known? Is it because he had the audacity to attack President Wilson's policies, or is it because within his heart he realizes that he is not telling the whole truth about a question of great import to millions of struggling Mexicans?

The alleged influence of Masonry in the present revolution of Mexico, as claimed by many Catholics, is absolutely without foundation. Every one who knows anything at all is aware of the fact that Masonry in Mexico is nothing more than a huge joke. That the Catholics are harboring wrong notions on the subject, is evidenced by the fact that Huerta's and Carbajal's special representative at Washington, Jose Castello, was a prominent Mason. Huerta sent him here under the impression that he would be assisted by his brother Masons, but he soon discovered that the Masonic Order would not mingle in politics, or have anything to do with the Mexican affairs.

The whole question of Masonry and its influence in Mexican politics as argued by the many American Catholics, is an exploded theory, it is an attempt to discuss a subject they always feared and did not comprehend.

If the men who plead the cause of the oppressed Mexican Clergy, are to be taken at their word, it would seem that the whole Mexican Nation is composed of inconsiderate brutes and beasts. They would like to create the impression that murder and rapine are rampant in that country, and that the main attacks are directed against the Catholic Clergy. Nothing is more ridiculous than such accusations. As a Mexican who has fought in the revolution against Huerta, and as a Catholic, I know that every Mexican is at heart a faithful believer in the Mother Church. More than once I have seen hundreds of soldiers kneel in prayer imploring the Almighty that he might bring peace to our land of strife! The first thing our soldiers did when we entered a city was to seek out the houses of worship and offer our prayers in thanks to Him who brought us victory. No, nothing is more false than the accusation that the Mexican people are against the Catholic Church and its priests.

To understand the true causes and reasons of dissension and strife between the people and certain members of the High Catholic Clergy, one must go back to the first struggles of Mexico against the Spanish domination. It is the same struggle. The same battles which the Mexicans fought a hundred years ago, they are fighting over to-day. Unfortunately, with the end of the Spanish domination and the liberation from the Spanish yoke, all the roots of the evil influences left by that regime were not torn out. The rulers of Spain left, but many of their harmful institutions staid behind, and it is against these institutions, which have been slowly devouring the minds of the Mexican people, which usurped all their rights, and kept them in ignorance, that we Mexicans are still fighting and struggling against.

To say that we are nothing short of murderers, that we wantonly persecute the priests and the nuns, is to slander the Mexican nation. They are falsehoods which are being utilized by certain men in this country who are seeking the intervention of the United States Government in Mexico. They are working hand in hand with the enemies of Mexican freedom; they are the evil forces which are seeking to curb the independence of our country.

One need only go back to the history of Mexico to see that it is the lower clergy who have always championed the cause of the poor and the oppressed. It was native members of the Church, who led the rebellion against the Spanish domination. So long as there is a Mexican or any other lover of freedom, the names of Miguel Hidalgo, Jose Maria Morelos and others too numerous to mention, will never be forgotten. They were priests. They were Catholics who had the interests of the people at heart. They were true Christians who realized the plight of the people and who, at their own sacrifice, led the people in revolt against the iron rule of Spain. Does any one believe that a nation which attained its freedom by the aid of its priests, would, a few years later, turn against them? Is any one naive enough to believe that?

hidalgo
morelos

But the priests who fought for the liberty of the Mexican peons, are not the high Church-dignitaries of to-day. During the three hundred years of Spanish rule over Mexico, the church comprised the secular and the regular clergy. The entire country was covered with convents and monasteries, filled with friars and nuns, for the most part living in idleness on the labors of the starved poens. At the time of the conquest, the King of Spain had given vast grants of land to the various religious orders. They were empowered to do anything they desired, so long as they kept the Mexicans in submission. They had the legal rights to enslave those who lived on the estates granted to them by the King, and christianize them. Those who failed to obey, or showed the least sign of disobedience, were punished with the well-known "Spanish Inquisition," the tortures of hell. Not content with their enormous original land-grants, the priests continually used their power to withhold Extreme Unction from the dying, as a means of obtaining death-bed inheritances. By such practises, the Church and certain high dignitaries of the church, became the Supreme Power of Mexico. With it also came the members of the church who were from the people, and who saw within the Christian Doctrine, not means of attaining fabulous wealth, but of securing liberty and justice for a suffering people. They were the Morelos, the Hidalgos, and others.

Thus it was that the Mexican people have learned to discern the difference between the High Clergy, who grafted and lived off the poor, and the poor clergy who helped the people and fought for them. It was to those poor native priests that the oppressed and town-trodden Mexicans went, in time of dire need. They felt and knew that

those priests were the true representatives of the Mother Church, and not those foreign, rich Spaniards or Frenchmen who lived on the fat of the land.

To illustrate what a power of wealth the church was in Mexico, I will quote "Mexico á través de los Siglos," Vol. IV, Page 317.

"With the exception of a certain amount of land owned by the aristocracy, almost all the valuable lands of Mexico were in the hands of the Church, and even those not so owned were under heavy mortgage to her, or were crushed with tithings and taxes which went into her coffers."

The same historian has this to say about the higher clergy:

"The clergy, mainly the higher officials, had accumulated and taken out of circulation an incalculable quantity of riches. In 1809 the tithings of six Bishops amounted to the sum of \$2,500,000—immense wealth in those days. There were Bishops and Archbishops whose salaries amounted to more than \$100,000 a year. Indeed, a careful estimate of the revenue of the Church, just previous to the War of Independence, reveals the enormous figure of \$50,000,000 a year."

It is but natural for any people which has been burdened with such obligations, to rebel. No matter how law-abiding or God-fearing they might be, it was impossible for them to endure the shameless conduct of the high dignitaries of the Catholic Church. The struggles for independence were but the beginning of a real uprising, against the stifling power of the Church. The Church had become such a powerful force in the political life, due to its enormous possessions that it could change the government any time it wished to do so. The people realized that they were at the mercy of a few foreign high church dignitaries, who could perform with their governments acrobatic tricks similar to those performed by a Japanese juggler with his five balls. A change was necessary, and it came after a three years' struggle, from 1857 to 1860.

The first important article of the Constitution of 1857, (Las Leyes de Reforma) dealt precisely with that sore upon the life of the Mexican Nation. Here it is:

Article 1. The immediate suppression of all monasteries and convents, and the immediate and complete confiscation of all church property, to the use of the Nation.

Article V. The establishment of civil recording authorities for births, marriages and deaths, thus abolishing the much abused privilege of the Church in the matter of establishing the civil status of persons.

It will be noticed from these articles, that the revolution was greatly concerned with the powers of the Church, and that it devoted much of the new Constitution to the elimination and the divorce of the Church from the State. However, it will be borne witness by any one who lived in Mexico any length of time, that every one was accorded religious liberty and that every one had the right to worship his God.

But I will not even attempt to answer all the charges that are being showered upon us. I will let someone else tell the story of our struggles and our plight. I will quote the Rev. Dr. John Buttler who has been a missionary in Mexico for forty years. I have never met the gentleman and do not know who he is. My first knowledge of him came when I read his open letter to the New York Evening Post. In this letter he frankly tells the sad story of our miserable life, our futile attempts to free ourselves from the yoke of centuries of slavery, and our heroic fight to keep up with the march of civilization, regardless of the stifling influence of the many reactionary forces.

I will not touch the phase of his letter in which he shows the unfairness of the American attitude towards our political upheaval, nor will I quote him where he answers the many groundless accusations of Col. Theodore Roosevelt. I will confine myself to the religious question only. The letter appeared on January 5th, 1915.

Mexican historians make clear why such drastic measures were necessarily incorporated into the Constitution and emphasized by the reform laws of 1859. It was, as one of them says, "because the Church became a very prominent factor in politics and could upset and establish governments at its pleasure, fomenting the many revolutions which were constantly breaking out." (Romero, Page 94). Therefore, it was that the political power of the Church was destroyed by effecting a complete independence of the Church and State, and the confiscation of all Church property from the most magnificent cathedral to the smallest chapel, and from the most extensive convent to the humblest shrine in the country. Hence all Church property not built in recent years belongs to the Government, which, in turn, gives a free lease to the Church of such edifices as are required for public worship. All this was brought to pass by the Liberal party, whose members lived and died in the Roman Catholic fold, though they were decidedly opposed to the Church as a political institution. Rare indeed the case when a Liberal declared himself opposed to Christianity. We repeat, then, that reports of the confiscating of Church property in these days is a mistake—such confiscation occurred nearly sixty years ago.

"Another mistaken charge is that the present leaders of the revolution are expelling priests, nuns, and other religious orders from Mexico. The same reason given above as to the political influence of the Church applied, and with special force, to all secret religious orders. Hence in 1873 Mexico believed it was for her best interests to promulgate additional reform laws, which expelled all such secret societies from the country. In this they only did what several countries in Latin America and many countries in Europe had found it necessary to do before them. (1) Now if Jesuits, nuns, and members of the

kindred orders have recently been found in Mexico they were there against the law, of the existence of which they certainly were not ignorant. If any previous Administration "winked" at their presence, that did not signify a justification for their remaining, and certainly the present authorities were fully authorized in reminding them of the law.

"It has also been asserted that many of the clergy have recently been expelled from the country. I believe, absolutely, in toleration and protection for the followers of all creeds. The Constitution of 1857 provides not only for the separation of church and state, but it also guarantees full religious liberty. This means for Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Jew, and no one has more reason to be grateful for these reasonable and just provisions of the Constitution than the ancient people of God whose descendants in Mexico were, in former times subjected to much cruel treatment simply for following the faith of their fathers. (2)

"Now, it appears true that a considerable number of priests have been sent out of the country, but the revolutionists claim that all such were foreigners and had given provocation. They likewise claim that many of these left "because of troubled consciences," or for fear they might be expelled. All foreigners who have resided in Mexico, whether priest or laymen, knew of the existence of the famous thirty-third article of the Constitution. This article was framed at a time when these secret orders were giving trouble to the Government, and it empowers the authorities to expel from the republic, without process of law, any foreigner found meddling with politics. We readily confess it is a tremendous power to place in the hands of any man. But the experience of the past called it into existence, and few are the foreigners in that land who have not heard of thirty-third article, and who have not a clear understanding of its significance.

That, however, is not the whole story concerning the high Catholic clergy. Of late much has been written about the ignorance and immorality prevalent among the poorer classes of the Mexican populace. It is said that a large majority of them totally disregard the marriage ceremony and live in open violation of the sacraments of marriage. What the causes and reasons are for such religious transgressions has never been offered by any of the accusers of Mexico's poor. One thing is certain and that is that the peons or Indians are not violating any of the canons of the church because they have ceased to believe in it. Far be it from such. An investigation has proven that the price for marriage sacraments, instituted by the high Catholic clergy, is so unreasonably high that it almost impossible for the poor to meet it. In this manner they are practically forced by the church dignitaries themselves to violate the canons of the church.

(1) This statement is not quite correct; European countries divorced the church from the State many years after Mexico had set the example.

(2) Before the overthrow of Spanish rule in Mexico, the Inquisition burned several Jews at the stake for refusing to be converted to the Catholic faith.

That demands for the lowering of the prices for various sacraments has been made by the populace of Mexico is well known to any one who has lived there. That those demands were made in vain, that the high Catholic dignitaries absolutely refused to comply with the demands of the poor is well known to every one in Mexico. To illustrate the benighted ways and means utilized by certain high clergymen I will quote Carlo de Fornaro from his book "Diaz, Czar of Mexico."

"The following incident will exemplify the insidious and treacherous ways used by the clericals to suppress opposition or liberalism in their midst.

In 1901 a priest called Joachin Perez, 50 years old, wrote to Monsignor Averadi, apostolic delegate, letters in which he begged for the modification of the high tariff for the administration of the sacraments. The petition was signed by thousands of Catholics. Monsignor Averadi diplomatically answered that he would consult the Pope. But instead of so doing, the Archbishop of Puebla and the Monsignor gave a private dinner to Mucio Martinez, Governor of Puebla, and convinced him that Perez was hatching a political conspiracy.

By order of the Governor the unfortunate priest was attacked in his parish, at Atlixco, at midnight, beaten and then taken to jail. All his property and chattels were confiscated and although suffering from rheumatism, he was kept in confinement for over fourteen months. Eventually through the efforts of his sister, who went to beg the intervention of her uncle, Ignacio Mariscal, Minister of foreign affairs, he was freed."

The instance sighted by Carlo de Fornaro is one of hundreds that can be brought to show wherein the high Catholic dignitaries always acted against the interests and desires of the poor and oppressed.

But the greatest tragedy of the Catholic Church in Mexico is that it is a house very much divided against itself. It possesses no unity of purpose, it has no honest desire to uplift, to educate and alleviate the needs and sorrows of the masses. The true condition of the Catholic Church is that it is composed of wealthy, foreign, high clergymen and of poor priests who are native Mexicans and Indians. Those native priests have a complete understanding of the hopes, aims and desires of the poor people. The wealthy, foreign high church

dignitaries have always brought naught but sorrow upon Mexico. They were responsible for French intervention, it is they who in the present struggle are trying to bring about the intervention of the United States. Instead of ministering to the soul needs of the Mexicans, the shamelessly indulge in the low game of politics. They intrigue, they scheme. They are the friends of the reactionary forces; the kow-towed with Diaz when he was in power and used Huerta and his henchman, Dr. Urrutia, when they reigned supreme. It will be seen from this that the Mexican people can have no love for those high church dignitaries, who always allied themselves with their enemies. In fact, they were the enemies for they always upheld the benighted forces of Mexico.

The shameless manner in which the high Catholic clergy forsook their religious offices and dabbled in politics is illustrated by the numerous letters which were left behind by Dr. Aureliano Urrutia, Minister of Interior in the Huerta cabinet. In the letters left behind by him it is to be seen that the Catholic clergymen were the real law-breakers of the country, violating wilfully and maliciously every law that has been set down by the Constitution of 1857. They did it quite openly, without hesitation and with brazeness that is not at all ecclesiastic.

When Dr. Urrutia scented danger and saw that the diabolic rule of Huerta was about to crumble into dust, he did not waste any time in leaving the country. In fact, he was in such a hurry to get out that he left behind him all his archives, consisting of many letters written to him by various high church dignitaries, such as Bishops, Archbishops and others. All those Dr. Urrutia pilled into a basket and turned over to an old woman for safekeeping. The dear old lady hardly realized what historic documents were in her possession.

It is a sad commentary upon the dignity of the Catholic church when its highest clergymen plan the overthrow of laws and order attained by the people after a struggle lasting three years. And that is just what they did. In one of the letters Archbishop Mora of Mexico suggested that Dr. Urrutia secure a million dollars for the Catholic Church for alleged damages. Both Archbishop Mora and Dr. Urrutia were fully cognizant of the fact that they were acting against the laws of the constitution. They knew that they violated the sacred principles of a constitution for which thousands died. How can such men like Archbishop Mora and Urrutia command respect when they are secretly planning to violate the laws of the country?

Is it at all surprising that Constitutionalists are forced to drive them out of the country, especially when they wantomly ignore the laws?

The thing that strikes me as most peculiar at the present time is the loud cries which the Catholics are raising against the Constitutional forces. At the same time while they are demanding protection for their coreligionists in Mexico, Germany is devastating one catholic country after another. The Mexican revolutionists never have made ancient and gorgeous cathedrals the targets of their shells, as the Germans have done. One cathedral after another was destroyed by the Germans who invaded Belgium and France. Nothing of that sort ever happened in Mexico. Still not a whisper has been heard from the Catholics of this country against German barbarism. Is it not strange that they should not ask the United States Government to intervene in behalf of the oppressed Catholics in Belgium, while they demand immediate action in Mexico. What are the reason that they shut their eyes to real atrocities in Belgium, while they are so carefully watching events in Mexico? The truth of the matter is that the high Catholic clergymen are awakening to the fact that the success of the Constitutionalists means the carrying out of the laws of 1857. It means the divorce of the church from the state. It means the end of the influence of the Catholic clergymen in affairs of the state. The high catholic dignitaries are realizing that their power is coming to an end and the only way possibly to retain it is to bring about the intervention of the United States or some other power.

However, the cries of the clergymen that the United States swoop down upon Mexico and at the point of a gun perpetuate the power of the Catholic church, is in itself the greatest indictment against the leaders who are working in that direction. No honest Christian would ever seek an unnecessary war with another nation. Fortunately the American people and the Washington administration are beginning to realize that not all is well with high Catholic dignitaries in Mexico.

TRANSLATIONS.

LETTER from Archbishop Gillow to URRUTIA.

Hacienda de Chautla, July 11th, 1913.

Sr. Dr. Aureliano Urrutia,
Minister of the Interior,
Mexico.

Esteemed Sir and Friend:

I returned to this Hacienda yesterday and was informed that up around Huejotzingo, capital of this District, things are rather unsettled, due to a few disturbers who molest the authorities, and consequently disturb public peace. Having in mind the kind offers which you made to me during my recent visit in that city, I now take the liberty of addressing you.

The disturbers of Huejotzingo are a certain Luis Pinto and his brother. They own real estate and small houses to the amount of may be Three Thousand Dollars each in that locality. They put on airs of caciques, and have for some time even gone so far as to pretend to subordinate the local authorities. They have become more overbearing since the time of Madero.

While Mr. Alberto García Granados was Minister of the Interior, the referred-to Pinto brothers attempted to overthrow Mr. Enrique Acevedo from his position as Governor of the Province. Mr. Acevedo has maintained the peace and well-being in this district ever since he came into office. As Mr. Granados, owner of the Hacienda de Chagua, near Huejotzingo, knows Mr. Acevedo, he maintained Mr. Acevedo as Governor, and the Pinto brothers did not molest him any more until Mr. Grandos resigned the secretaryship.

As Mr. Acevedo is well acquainted with the intrigues of the Pinto brothers, he has kept them well watched, and they, resenting this, have hostilized him, to the degree of having trumped up false accusations against him before the municipality of Puebla. They did not however, obtain their end, for they were unable to obtain his removal, though he was for a time suspended from office, much to the regret of the honest contingent of Huejotzingo. The Mayor replaced him during this time.

On the other hand, Mr. Ramon Vargas, Judge of the Primary Court of Claims of Huejotzingo, has been for three months working unceasingly to put to date all pending causes, which had been accumulating, due to the fact that his predecessors, partly due to indifference and partly to fear of the Revolution, often absented themselves, abandoning their offices. Among those, who most distinguished themselves of these last mentioned, was a certain Felipe Ramirez, whose wife is a Huejotzingo woman, on which account he was of course interested in holding that position in Huejotzingo. The mother of the lady in question also found a way to take advantage of the situation, and arranged things so that those who wished their cases attended to, had to have a recommendation from her, if they wanted a favorable judgment. For this she was of course paid a certain sum, and she managed to derive quite a fine income.

This by-play came to the knowledge of Mr. García Granados, and he managed to obtain from the Puebla Municipality to offer the Judge Felipe Ramirez, to transfer him to Matamoros, which offer he declined, staying in Huejotzingo and exercising his profession of lawyer. This Mr. Ramirez works in harmony with the Pinto brothers, and the three of them, openly antagonize Acevedo the Governor, Ramon Vargas, the Judge and Sidonio Primo, Commissioner of the Ministry, who is an old employe in this locality and who works together with the other two last mentioned.

With the foregoing details, and prompted by the desire to maintain order and peace in this district, I beg you to exert your good influence with the government of Puebla, to have Mr. Acevedo return to his post, and to have Mr. Ramon Vargas the present Judge, and also Mr. Sodronio Primo, stay in their positions. The presence of Mr. Felipe Ramirez, who still pretends to occupy the position of Judge in this District, is very harmful to public interests, as is also the presence of the Pinto brothers, so that although I harbor no feelings of personal enmity towards them for I do not know them except from hearsay, I beg to suggest the advantage of their being removed from this locality, in whatever way you may deem most appropriate.

Kindly forgive the length of this letter, but I feel justified in giving you all these details, for the sake of the preservation of peace in this region, which has some importance due to its relations to Puebla and Mexico.

Thanking you in advance for whatever you may deem fit to do in the interests of the honest citizens who have given me the above information, and which I transmit to you confidentially, I beg to remain,

Very resp'y etc., etc.,

EULOGIO G. GILLOW,
Archbishop of Oaxaca.

From Archbishop Mora to Urrutia.

Mexico, July 12th, 1913.

To the Minister of the Interior, Dr. Aureliano Urrutia, Present.

My Esteemed Dr. and Friend:

You have said to me more than once, "Profit by the present times. No one will give you more than ourselves" which to me signifies your good will towards the church. Therefore, counting on it, I beg to put before you, for your consideration, the following:

1. Violating the laws of disentailment, the Archbishop of Mexico was deprived of his palace in this capital, and same has not been put to any use for government offices. Could you not see that it was given back to me, so I could repair it and occupy it and then leave it to my successors? If this could be done, he whose servants we are would take account of your good action, and we would all be very grateful to you. I do not think this is an impossibility.

2. It also has occurred to me that the Government might make to the Cathedral some restitution for which, even accepting the new laws as just, should have been respected and left, such as: Cash, sacred vases, such as chalices, shrines, lamps, articles of silver, jewels, all of which was taken from the cathedral. The cathedral was also deprived of the Seminary next door, and the houses of the chaplains, all of which is excepted in the laws of disentailment. All this amounts to a big sum, for in only gold chalices, there were eighteen lost. How is this to be repaid? I have an idea, which is: The expenses of the church, salary per month of the Archbishop, chaplains and priests, sacristains, amount annually to about Sixty Thousand Dollars. And you need not believe that the salaries are high, for the Archbishop has a salary of only \$750 per month, and with this sum he has to attend the vicechancellor, dress, servants, household expenses and alms, of which he has many as all the poor of the city go to him for help. The canons have a salary of \$120 monthly, and the chaplains of the choir from \$30 to \$40. So that as you can well figure out, their living has to be very modest, for out of these salaries they have to pay house rent, food and dress. What is left out of the \$60,000 mentioned, after paying expenses, is used for repairs to the house and ornaments. At present, we have a deficit every year, which deficit we of course try to keep as low as possible. The parishioners contributions, which is the only thing we can count on towards the support of the church, diminishes every year.

In consideration of all the above, the Government could do us a great favor, by giving us a capital which should produce enough to be able to keep what we have now. This capital should be of ONE MILLION DOLLARS, and this would be less, much less than (even admitting the laws which at that time deprived the church of its property), was taken unjustly away from the Church.

This capital could be handed over to the church in parts, from economies made on certain expenses, and the money could be put into shares, bonuses, etc., etc. This would enable the Cathedral to be better attended to, making the necessary reparations, and decorating it conveniently.

Think this over well, my dear Minister, and act according to the dictates of your good heart of Christian and patriot, and we shall be pleased to call you our Great Benefactor.

With all due respect, I remain, etc., etc.,

JOSE, *Archbishop of Mexico.*

LETTER from the ARCHBISHOP of PUEBLA to URRUTIA.

Puebla, July 12th, 1913.

To his Honor Minister URRUTIA,
Mexico.

Very Esteemed Sir:

Your favor of the 9th inst. duly to hand and in reply I beg to say that I shall be very pleased to assist you by working along the lines suggested by you. I shall only wait now until I hear from Mr. Gillow so that we may come to an understanding on a matter as delicate and important as the one in question.

May the Lord bless you in all your undertakings, and I beg to remain as always at your service.

Very respectfully, etc., etc.,

RAMON, *Archbishop of Puebla.*

LETTER from the ARCHBISHOP of OAXACA, to DR. URRUTIA.

Oaxaca, July 24th, 1913.

My Esteemed Friend:

In view of the benevolence which you have always shown towards me, I now beg to address you regarding a subject which I consider of the utmost importance. Although it does not regard the department in your charge directly, it is nevertheless closely connected with it, and is a matter of universal importance to the republic.

Before granting concessions for the international and inter-oceanic railways, General Porfirio Diaz organized a commission, consisting of a lawyer, an engineer and myself, to study and report on the already mentioned concessions which meant so much to the country. During two months I gave myself up to the study of this question, and the Commission presented eighteen reports embracing the different points of the subject, including a special statement by me, as I did not agree with the two others on certain points which I considered essential, and because I was of the opinion that a big reduction could be made in the subventions demanded by the grantees.

Time has proved that my ideas were correct, relative to the delay in the construction of the interoceanic roads, and as to the advisability of building a broad-gauge railway from Mexico to Laredo right from the start.

At that time, the Tehuantepec Railroad did not have the importance that it has now, and the Commission did not give any consideration to that point, taking it for granted that later on the interests of the nation would take up the question of connections with the Isthmus and the extension south to Guatemala, which would put us in communication with Central and South America.

Just now, I cannot get it out of my mind, that of all the R. R. that are being planned for the republic, there are two lines which should have the preference, because they will be of the greatest importance in the future and because they complete our railway system across the country. I refer to the prolongation of the Oaxaca R. R. to Tehuantepec, and which, starting from the Isthmus R. R. would connect us with the different states of the Yucatan peninsula. I understand that this concession has already been granted, and that the plans were being made ready when the revolution started.

The prolongation of the R. R. to Oaxaca or rather to Tlacolula, as the track is already laid up to that city, is that to which I wish to call your best attention, and also that of the President of the Republic. At present, to communicate from Mexico to Tehuantepec, the Government has to make use of three different railways: the Mexican RY up to Córdoba, the Vera Cruz Pacific up to Sta. Lucrecia, and the Interoceanic of the Isthmus. For any military mobilization, the inconvenience and delay occasioned by this system is evident, and, should one of these three lines be cut by the revolutionists, the Government would have no communication with the Tehuantepec and Pan-American R. R.—which connects us with Guatemala.

This proves the necessity of completing as soon as possible, the line from Mexico to Tehuantepec, via Puebla and Oaxaca, which line, though not the shortest, at least has not the inconvenience of the steep ascent and decline of the summits of Maltrata, but which instead, descends gradually from Puebla to the coast.

The Isthmus of Tehuantepec has without doubt, a great future ahead, for it is, using Baron Humboldt's expression, "the bridge of the universe" connecting on one side, Asia and Europe, and on the other North and South America.

If it is true that the Isthmus of Panama is to give us a route by water, without having to trans-ship merchandise, one must not lose sight of the fact of the increased distance by water, between New York and San Francisco, and at the same time the inconvenience of passing the locks and the charges for same. Whereas, the Tehuantepec R. R. has already sufficient traffic assured to guarantee its existence, and the cost of transshipment can therefore be reduced to a minimum.

The prolongation of this Railroad regards closely the department of Secretary of the Interior, for in time of revolution this would give them a firmer hold on—the State of Oaxaca. Lately it has been seen how, once the Southern Mexican cut, we have been without communications with Central Mexico for a long time, whereas, if the prolongation referred to existed, going round by that way to Tehuantepec, the State would be better off and the Federal Government would have the necessary means to successfully fight a rebellion.

This is of greater importance in a state like Oaxaca, because it is so mountainous and because it has an outlet to both oceans, the Gulf and the Pacific.

To finish herewith, I am greatly interested in the construction of the prolongation in question for the advantage of the people of my diocese. I have travelled through the state twice and I can assert that it is one of the richest in the republic, for its mining as well as for its agricultural products, but I consider it poor in spite of its having one million inhabitants because it lacks rapid and economical ways of communication.

While waiting for the construction of railways along the Pacific coast and the coast of Tuxtepec to this capital, it is necessary to construct at least a central line which will traverse the State up to Tehuantepec.

These valleys which surround the capital have an exuberance of inhabitants, and the products of their lands are hardly sufficient to supply their own needs. This explains the general poverty existing, there being no exports, and it is also explained by the emigration of oaxaqueños to other states, it having been calculated that only in Mexico City there are more than three thousand oaxa-

quenos, who would surely come back to their native state, could they make their living there.

I hope you will excuse my having occupied your time with such a lengthy letter. I have read in the papers that the Government was negotiating the construction of some railways, I have thought it right to call your attention to the above, so that if possible, you might give them the preference.

With the assurance of my profound respect, I beg to remain,

Very truly yours, etc.,

EULOGIO G. GILLOW,
Archbishop of Oaxaca.

LETTER from DR. URRUTIA to the ARCHBISHOP of Oaxaca.

August 2d, 1913.

Very Illustrious Sir:

Your favor of July 24th received and I have read it over with great attention, and considering your suggestion relative to the construction of a Railroad from Oaxaca to Tehuantepec, of great importance, not only from the military point of view, but also for the convenience of the public in general, I shall take an interest and see that your suggestion is carried out as soon as circumstances permit, which I trust will be very soon, for we have good reasons to believe that peace will soon be established all throughout the republic.

I beg to reiterate my appreciation and respects.

URRUTIA.

LETTER OF THE ARCHBISHOP of MICHOACAN to Minister URRUTIA.

September 11th, 1913.

My dear Compadre:

The timely measures taken by you saved this city from being ravaged by the rebel gangs which have been concentrating in these localities to the number of over a thousand strong, but now, I think I can assure you that if the detachment which has just arrived, pursues them, this part of the State will soon be pacified.

The principal object of this letter is to ask you to relieve me of a great anxiety under which I am laboring, and which has been caused by the aggressive and almost scandalous attitude taken in public by Mr. Calero and a small group of porristas, against your good self. I can well see that their object is to tarnish the glory which you have so justly won, and to alienate your adherents all over the Republic.

But they will not accomplish anything, because all the sensible men know full well the envy and intrigues that animate these degraded people. Although I am at ease on that score, my profound sympathy and affection for you make me fear that these men's intrigues might put obstacles on the path that Our Lord and His Blessed Mother have put before you to climb to the culminating position of *Chief Executive of the Republic*, which position will require of you the greatest sacrifice, but will at the same time lay before you a vast field in which to exercise your activity for the glory and honor of God, and for the benefit of our beloved country.

In the meantime I beg of you to tell me confidentially if this threat of Calero is to be feared, or whether you think it will be easy for you to humiliate the efforts of these upstarts.

Your comadre, etc.,

JENARO MENDEZ.